

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Gary Taylor, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

FROM: Matthew McKinney, Director, Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy  
Shawn Johnson, Associate, Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy

DATE: July 20, 2009

RE: Regional Conservation Efforts in the U.S.

We have prepared this memorandum at the request of Robert Bendick, Director of U.S. Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy. The purpose of the memorandum is to provide a brief overview of regional conservation efforts in the USA.

By regional conservation, we mean efforts that are multi-jurisdictional; focus on some mix of social, economic, and environmental values; and respond to a challenge/opportunity not addressed through existing means or governance arrangements. The memo is organized as follows:

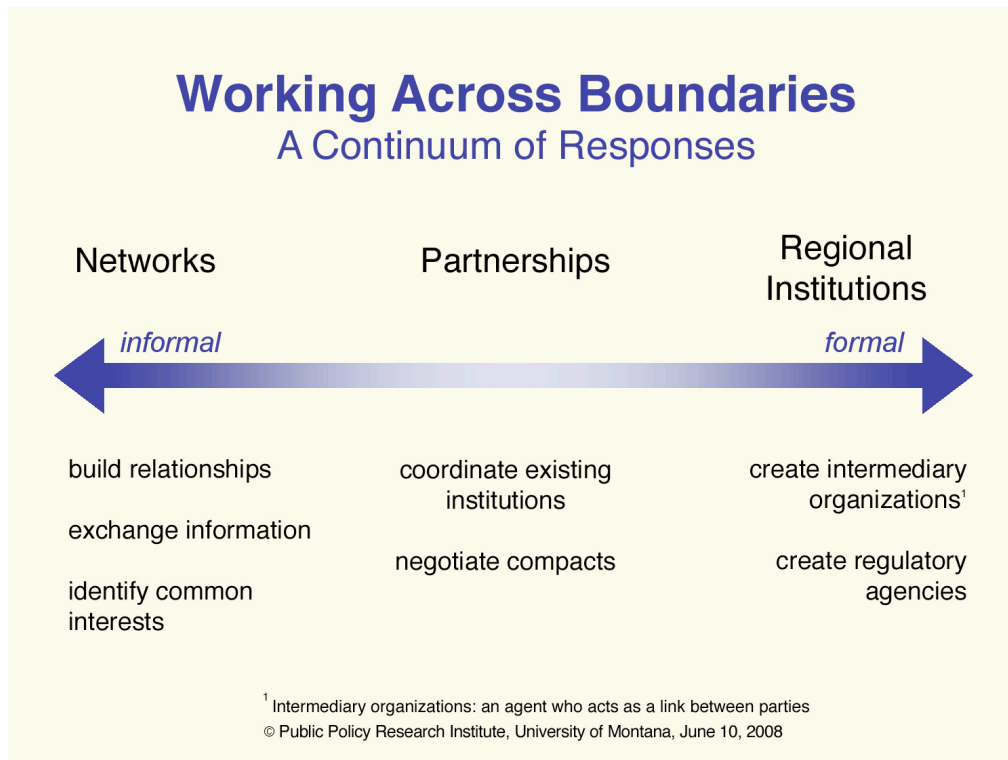
1. Models of Regional Conservation - This discussion is based on our research and practice over the past 10 years on a variety of regional land use, natural resource, and environmental projects in North America.
2. Preliminary Inventory of Regional Conservation Efforts - This inventory is a work in progress. It provides a representative sample of regional initiatives throughout the USA and forms the foundation for a database we (in partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and others) are creating on regional conservation efforts.
3. Sample Profile of a Regional Conservation Effort - This profile is a sample of the type of information that will be included in the forthcoming database. If you have suggestions on how to improve the profiles and/or database, please let us know.

The information for this memo was generated during the course of several workshops, clinics, demonstration projects, and research on regional approaches to land use, natural resources, and environmental policy. The major lessons from this body of work are presented in our forthcoming book *Working Across Boundaries: People, Nature, and Regions* (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2009). Many of the lessons are captured on a web site at [www.lincolninst.edu/subcenters/regional-collaboration](http://www.lincolninst.edu/subcenters/regional-collaboration)

We look forward to working with all of you and others to promote and support regional conservation.

## 1. Models of Regional Conservation

Based on our experience with regional collaboration and our study of a wide range of regional initiatives in North America, we see a continuum of approaches for regional conservation — from informal networks, to more formal partnerships, to new regional institutions (*see figure below*). Thinking in terms of this continuum helps to recognize that these approaches overlap in some ways, and that the differences among them are often subtle. Regional initiatives also tend to follow a progression from informal to more formal as people go through the process of thinking and acting regionally.



The distinction between a network and a partnership, or a partnership and a new regional institution, is not always clear and clean. These categories are intentionally broad, and within each are various models and approaches that also range from informal to formal. In a 2007 conversation with Douglas Porter, a recognized expert in land use and growth management, he suggested that:

All regional efforts are assemblages of cooperating interests and groups, and all have established some type of working arrangement — some more artfully framed than others. The differences appear in aspects such as the range of issues and concerns that bring them together, the size and complexity of the geographical area they are focused on, the strength of the structural relationships they have established in which to function, the type of “official” establishment within recognized public or private organizations, and their method of assuring (or not) a continuing presence.

## 2. Preliminary Inventory of Regional Conservation Efforts

The following inventory of regional conservation efforts provides a representative sample of regional initiatives throughout the USA and forms the foundation for a database we are creating on regional conservation efforts.

### **Networks**

Freedom to Roam (2008)  
Crown of the Continent Roundtable (2008)  
Two Countries, One Forest (2003)  
Envision Utah (1997)  
Fraser Basin Council Charter for Sustainability (1997)  
Yellowstone to Yukon (1997)  
Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (1986)  
Great Lakes Charter (Great Lakes Commission) (1985)

### **Partnerships**

Western Governors' Association's Wildlife Corridors Initiative (2007)  
Highlands Conservation Plan Act (2004)  
Sacramento Region Blueprint (2002)  
Southern California Compass Blueprint (2000)  
Denver Mile High Compact (2000)  
Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (1998)  
Platte River Cooperative Agreement (1997)  
Balcones Canyonlands Habitat Conservation Plan (1996)  
Malpai Borderlands (1991)  
Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (1964)

### **Regional Institutions (Intermediary Organizations)**

Yellowstone Business Partnership (2001)  
Sierra Business Council (1994)  
Grand Canyon Trust (1985)  
Regional Plan Association (1922)

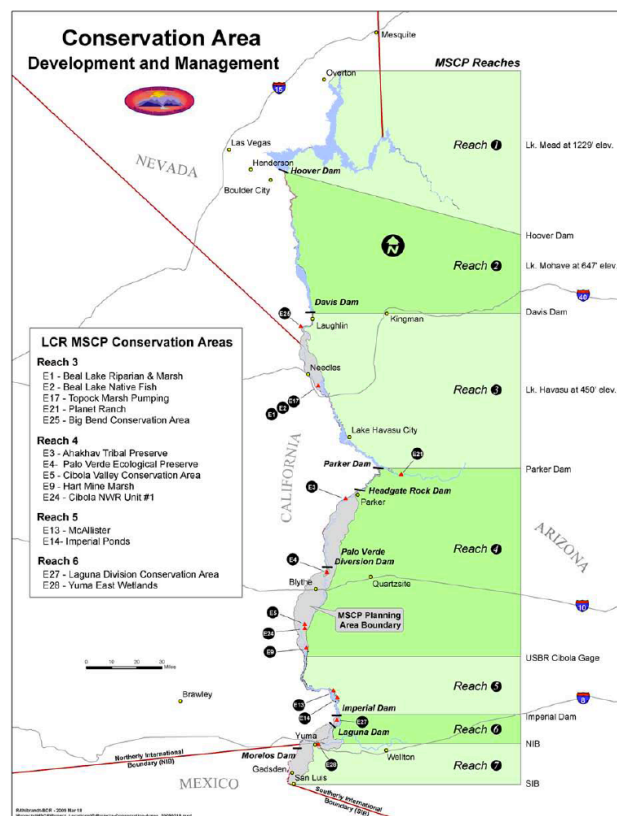
### **Regional Institutions (Regulatory Agencies or Policies)**

Lower Colorado River Multispecies Conservation Program (2005)  
Sierra Nevada Framework (2004)  
California Bay Delta Authority (2003)  
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration (1996)  
Northwest Forest Plan (1994)  
Long Island Pine Barrens Commission (1993)  
Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Plan (1993)  
Portland Metro (1992)  
Cape Cod Commission (1990)  
Murray-Darling Basin Commission (Australia) (1987)  
Columbia River Gorge Commission (1986)  
Chesapeake Bay Commission (1980)  
Northwest Power and Conservation Council (1980)  
New Jersey Pinelands Commission (1979)  
Adirondack Park Agency (1971)  
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (1969)  
Columbia River Treaty (1964)  
Delaware River Basin Commission (1961)  
Palisades Interstate Park Commission (1900)

### 3. Sample Profile of a Regional Conservation Effort

This profile is a sample of the type of information that will be included in the forthcoming database. The database remains a work in progress, and we welcome any and all feedback on how to improve the profiles.

#### Lower Colorado River Multi-species Conservation Plan



#### Location and Size

The Lower Colorado River MSCP covers areas up to and including the full-pool elevations of Lakes Mead, Mohave and Havasu and the historical floodplain of the Colorado River from Lake Mead to the United States-Mexico Southernly International Boundary, a distance of about 400 river miles. Conservation measures focus on the area from Hoover Dam to the border.

#### Catalyst

In 1994, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Department of the Interior, designated much of the Lower Colorado River Basin as critical habitat for several protected species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), including the endangered Bonytail chub, Humpback chub, Razorback sucker, Yuma clapper rail, and Southwestern willow flycatcher. This designation spurred the development of the LCR MSCP.

#### Number of jurisdictions/entities

Fifty-six (56) entities were involved in the development of the plan, including water, hydroelectric power and wildlife management agencies in Arizona, California and Nevada; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and National Park Service; Arizona Department of Water Resources and Arizona Game and Fish Department; Colorado River Board of California and California Department of Fish and Game; Colorado River Commission of Nevada and Nevada Division of Wildlife; Chemehuevi, Cocopah Indian Tribe, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Fort Yuma Quechan Tribe, and Hualapai Tribe; and the Arizona Power Authority, Central Arizona Project, Coachella Valley Water District, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Imperial Irrigation District, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Nevada Power Company, Overton Power District No. 5, Palo Verde Irrigation District, San Diego County Water Authority, Silver State Power, Southern California Public Power Authority, Southern Nevada Water Authority, Valley Electric Association, Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District, Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas and Electric, Pacific Gas and Electric, and Trout Unlimited/Bass Anglers Sportsman Society.

#### Values addressed (e.g., environmental, economic, recreational, cultural, etc.)

The LCR MSCP attempts to balance the water resource needs of the region's communities and agricultural sector with the need to preserve and restore habitat and riparian areas for the

health and survival of native species. The MSCP's purposes are to (1) protect the lower Colorado River environment while ensuring the certainty of existing river water and power operations; (2) address the needs of threatened and endangered wildlife under the Endangered Species Act; and (3) prevent the listing of additional species on the lower Colorado River.

Developed between 1996 and early 2005, the plan (including an Environmental Impact Statement, Habitat Conservation Plan, and Biological Assessment) for this 50-year effort includes the goal of creating more than 8,100 acres of riparian, marsh and backwater habitat for four listed species and 16 other species native to the lower Colorado River. It also includes measures to protect and enhance an additional two listed and four non-listed species, and plans for stocking more than 1.2 million juvenile razorback sucker and bonytail to augment the existing populations of these fish in the lower Colorado River. Implementation of the program began in April 2005 with the signing of a Record of Decision by the Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

The implementation activities are based on adaptive management principles, which allow program conservation measures to be adjusted over time based on monitoring and research.

#### Type of agreement/governance arrangement

The Bureau of Reclamation, in consultation and partnership with a Steering Committee made up of representatives from the 56 participating entities, is the primary implementing agency for this activity.

As defined in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that created the stakeholder process, the Steering Committee provided input, advice, guidance, and direction to the responsible agencies. These agencies included the Federal Agencies for compliance under Section 7 of the ESA, the Nonfederal Permittees under Section 10 of the ESA, and the Metropolitan Water District for California ESA compliance. The responsible agencies retained their regulatory authority. To the extent that the Steering Committee achieved consensus, the consensus recommendation was included in the final conservation plan.

The Steering Committee consisted of a chair and vice chair, a POC (who managed the contracts), facilitators/mediators, consultants, and subcommittees. While all of the participants had a stake in the process and its outcome, some (notably the federal agencies, the Nonfederal Permittees and The Metropolitan Water District) also had regulatory authority.

#### Decision-making rules and dispute resolution mechanisms

The intent of the Steering Committee was to reach consensus. If consensus could not be achieved, the participants used a voting procedure (which is spelled-out in the MOA).

#### Lessons learned

Data collection, organization, and management are essential to the early stages of the Adaptive Management Program (AMP). Another aspect of the AMP that is needed early on is a tool box of evaluation techniques that can gauge the effectiveness of conservation measures as they are completed.

Because the LCR MSCP is a habitat-based program, extensive monitoring of created habitats (both pre-and post-development) is necessary to evaluate implementation and effectiveness of designed habitat creation projects.

#### Additional information

Further information on the LCR MSCP can be found at [www.lcrmscp.gov](http://www.lcrmscp.gov).